

What Prepared Me for Life:

Thank you so much for contacting me recently. I am extremely honored that you have chosen me as your present-day Texas leader. Good luck with your paper. I have enclosed my biography which answers the majority of your questions. However, there are a few that it does not address.

Mother and Father:

My parents are Callie and Nelson Combest who reside in Panhandle, Texas.

Significant Contribution to Texas:

I am only the third U.S. Congressman to represent the 19th District of Texas, and its first Republican. I owe my success to my constituents, and the fact that they expect me to uphold my oath of office. I am able to do this by keeping in close touch with the people back home. Prior to being a Member of Congress, I worked as a member of U.S. Senator John Tower's staff. While working for Senator Tower, I worked on issues that affected the agricultural communities in Texas. This experience enabled me to be a productive member and now Vice Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee. It also aided me in the work on the Farm Bill and the desalinization of our region's water supply in the 104th Congress.

Other contributions I have made to Texas are supporting measures that allow our state more local control and reduce federal bureaucracy, like the 104th Congress' welfare reform package and returning highway speed limit authority to states. I have taken the liberty of enclosing more information regarding other initiatives I have strongly supported--the final installment for the Texas Tech Plant Stress lab and the 1996 Farm Bill.

Interesting or Little Known Fact:

Part of farm life, as I found out as a teenager, is digging postholes and stringing fence wire. Pounding the heavy posthole digger into the hard West Texas ground came to be a part of what my grandfather called "character builders." I suppose at the time, I only saw that fences needed mending and it was a part of my job in the family to pitch in. Now, each time I head home from Washington to discuss concerns with constituents, as I will be doing over the Easter recess, the fence lines along the Farm to Market roads remind me of lessons from home.

Any farmer can tell you that the hard earth does not give way very easily, but it can teach a lot about life. You can learn about determination from repeatedly pounding and pulling the dirt to dig deeply and narrowly so each fencepost will stand firm. Without enough determination and digging, however, any effort will be wasted because the fencepost won't hold the tension of the fence wire. Dig the hole too wide, and besides spending too much effort, the post will wobble.

One can learn life's lessons of determination and focus without digging postholes, but that particular chore has the additional benefit of producing something immediately useful. After a day's work, you have a fence; years later, seeing fence lines could remind you of what you may have learned.

The tough turf of Washington demands determination and focus. Keeping in mind the lessons learned from home helps keep my personal compass set in the right direction. Then, frequent return trips like the one over Easter, as well as questionnaires, letters and phone calls serve as sort of a reinforcement on the direction of my voting record for constituents in Congress. On these trips home, I learn of your concerns, and I can offer you my sense of how certain legislation could have a stake in your future.

Another lesson that digging postholes reminds me of is keeping on course. Out in the pastures, digging the spot for the next posthole depends on the position of the one before it. The direction of the fence line depends a lot on each step in the process. Keeping your sights set on where you have been and where you are going was an important lesson--the kind of "character builder" in digging postholes that my grandfather was teaching me to always remember.